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EXPERTS ON SOVIET INTERVIEW EMIGRES

U.S.-Funded Project Is Aimed
at Gaining Deeper Insights
Into Russian System

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 1 — The Defense Department, the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department have financed a five-year, \$7.5 million academic research project into how the Soviet system works, based on interviews with émigrés.

In a news briefing Thursday, details of the project, which began two years ago, were disclosed by Paul K. Cook, a longtime State Department specialist on the Soviet Union, and James R. Millar, a University of Illinois economist, who heads the nine-person research team at the university in Urbana.

Mr. Cook, who is the Government coordinator for the project, said \$3.7 million of the \$7.5 million had been allocated so far, with two-thirds coming from the Pentagon, less than a third from the C.I.A. and the rest from the State Department.

The results of the project, which is directed by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, a nongovernmental body financed by the Government, are to be published.

Near Half Came to the U.S.

Emigration is severely restricted for all Soviet citizens, but Jews have been most prominent among those getting permission to leave.

Mr. Millar said 250,000 Soviet citizens, about 85 percent of them Jewish, 10 percent Armenian, and the rest Russian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian, had emigrated since 1970. About 100,000 are in the United States, and half of them live in the New York area.

When the flow of Soviet Jews began in the early 1970's, the State Department asked Israel, where most of them were then going, whether it would allow interviews, and the Israelis rejected the request, for fear of jeopardizing future emigration. The current study is based on interviews with émigrés in the United States.

An earlier inquiry into the workings of Soviet society based on interviews with émigrés was conducted at Harvard University in the early 1950's by Raymond A. Bauer, Alex Inkeles, and Clyde Kluckhohn, sociologists with an interest in the Soviet Union. Mr. Inkeles has been an adviser on the new project, Mr. Millar said.

Most of the people interviewed in the Harvard project were Ukrainians who had come under German occupation in World War II and preferred not to remain in the Soviet Union.

Scholars Are Aware of Bias

Mr. Millar said that both this study and the Harvard project were aware that respondents were potentially biased and did not necessarily represent Soviet society as a whole.

But one émigré, Aaron Vinokur, a former Novosibirsk sociologist who is now at the University of Haifa in Israel, said that Jews, who make up the majority of the émigrés, were representative of Soviet urban society and that the selected sample of 2,800 people to be interviewed included non-Jews as well as assimilated Jews.

Mr. Millar said he did not believe that the use of émigrés for such an interview project would jeopardize future emigration. He said emigration had declined in any event by the time the study began. The peak was reached in 1979, when 51,000 people left.

The purpose of the research is "to fill crucial gaps in our knowledge about the structure and function of the Soviet system," according to Mr. Millar. He said the interviewing would be over by Nov. 1 and it would take a year to correlate results and two more years before publication would begin.